

Please amend Claim 1 as follows:

1. (AMENDED) An electronic operating device for operating one or more gas discharge lamps which contain filaments, the operating device having the following features:

- an AC voltage generator (G3) which feeds an AC voltage into a load circuit,
- a load circuit which contains at least one lamp and is designed such that the phase of the current which flows in the load circuit is determined with reference to the applied AC voltage, essentially by at least one component which conducts a current which flows through the filaments, and
- a device for measuring the phase of the current, which flows in the load circuit, with reference to the applied AC voltage wherein the operating device is disconnected as soon as the above-named device for measuring the phase detects a phase angle which violates a prescribed limiting value.

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to correct an obvious typographical error.

Claims 1 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,075,599 to Overgoor et al in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,008,593 to Ribarich.

The Examiner states that Overgood et al does not disclose lamp filaments, determining current phase essentially by at least one component which conducts a current which flows through the filaments, or wherein the operating device is disconnected as soon as phase measurement device detects a phase angle which violates a prescribed limiting value. The Examiner is of the opinion that what is lacking in Overgood et al is disclosed by Ribarich. The Examiner concludes that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to include current phase determination and disconnection of source power as taught by Ribarich into Overgoor et al for the purpose of providing a potential free evaluation of the current in a lamp.